Without Open Arms: The Alaska Response to the World War II-Era Refugee Crisis

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In the 1920s and 30s, Alaskan economic and infrastructure development was blocked by a demographic paradox. New infrastructure and economic development were required to prompt settlers to move to Alaska; the development of infrastructure and a variegated economy required a significant influx of settlers. The onset of World War II and the attendant genocidal policies of Germany resulted in hundreds of thousands of refugees, most of whom were Jewish men, women, and children. One possible solution to these dilemmas originated from the Department of the Interior. The Slattery Report proposed easing immigration restrictions and resettling European refugees in Alaska.

Whatever logical and emotional appeal this solution presented on its surface was rejected by a wave of anti-foreigner sentiment arising from Alaska’s leadership and populace that undercut the proposal at the heart of the Slattery Report. The response made explicit the disparity between realities and perceptions of self among Alaskans; a belief in Alaskan exceptionalism masked a darker xenophobic aspect. European refugees, particularly the Jewish population most in need of succor, were identified by many Alaskans as inferior potential settlers on the basis of their culture, religion, race, and foreign origin. The incident further demonstrated that white Alaskan demands for economic development were surpassed by their concerns for the racial purity of the territory.

As far as Alaskans were concerned, European Jewish refugees were a race apart from Americans, and the debate over immigration and refugees revealed the white stakeholder’s preference for development by American whites only. As the United States expanded, from East to West to the Far North, prejudice accompanied the settler. Such biases were part of the people and not the land, despite the protestations of those who formed bonds with their locale. Thus, prejudice and discrimination are as inherent to

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the social structure under the Northern Lights as in Boston, Montgomery, Chicago, and Portland.

As of the late 1930s, the infrastructure within the territory suffered from a lack of development. Towns in Alaska lacked roads to one another, and residents relied upon railroads, planes, and boats for connections. Similarly, before the public opening of the Alaska-Canadian Highway in 1947, Alaska was only tenuously connected by shipping and air lanes to the contiguous United States. Most Alaskans believed that industry and infrastructure would follow an increase in population, the demand prompting supply. Per a Seward Gateway editorial, “With the coming of more people it will be found that persistent demands for more roads and other improvements will grow less. They will not be necessary as they will come naturally with the advent of population.”

Anthony Dimond, Alaska’s nonvoting representative to Congress from 1933 to 1945, claimed succinctly that “Alaska needs people” and that development required the population of the territory to “be in accord with its vast area and unquestionably large natural resources.”

As a territory, Alaska fell under the jurisdiction of the Interior Department, which was controlled by Secretary Harold Ickes throughout the Franklin Roosevelt administration. Guided by Ickes’ personal support, and after a year of research, The Problem of Alaskan Development was published in August 1939. Commonly referred to as the Slattery Report after its signatory author Harry Slattery, it documented the abundance of natural resources within the territory, a low population density, and the resultant minimal attempts to exploit those extant resources. The proposed solution was a population influx: “Growth of population in a newly opened territory creates markets in the territory itself, and the growth of population and trade inevitably results in the improvement of transportation facilities.”

As noted in the Slattery Report, Americans themselves had failed to develop Alaska appreciably in the 70 years since the 1867 purchase of the territory from Russia. Even given the rampant unemployment during the Great Depression, the allure of untapped resources did not produce an appreciable influx of settlers from the contiguous states. Given a choice of destinations in America, most migrants during the Great Depression chose familiarity and more established infrastructures.

The Slattery Report’s simple solution was that “Alaska must seek its population growth as did the United States through immigration.” At this time, the United States capped immigration via a quota system according to the immigrants’ country of origin. The report’s authors opined that from an Alaska perspective “any leg-

islation preventing the migration of immigrants to territory that demands population is injurious and despotic.”

For several months after the release of the Slattery Report, Interior officials worked on draft legislation to enact its recommendations. William H. King and Robert F. Wagner, Democrats from Utah and New York, respectively, introduced the Alaska Development Bill to the Senate in early 1940, with Representative Franck Havenner, Democrat from California, reciprocating within the House. The King-Havenner bill proposed loosening immigration quotas for Alaska for those between the ages of 16 and 45 and capable of physical labor. As described by departmental press releases, the intent was both to nurture Alaska development and provide humanitarian aid to European refugees. Ickes and the Slattery Report authors assumed Alaskans would welcome an organized population influx, especially as it answered such an admitted need within the territory.

The hoped for support in Alaska did not appear. In its stead, anger and resentment towards the proposal, the legislation, and Ickes arose across the territory. In less than two weeks after the proposal was publicized in Alaska, the Juneau Chamber of Commerce organized the opposition. Letters from the chamber were read across the state, labeling the proposal a “scheme” to be “vigorously opposed.” Likewise, the Fairbanks Chamber concluded that “forced population development through governmental colonization and the dumping of refugees and indigents generally upon Alaska would be vexatious and costly to the territory.” The Anchorage Chamber found no logic in the Slattery Report: “We cannot conceive of how foreign refugees, for many years, can be of any benefit in developing the dormant resources of Alaska.”

Ickes himself noted additional antipathy towards the Slattery Report from the Valdez and Douglas chambers.

The response of Alaska political leaders, while similar in tone, was not predicated upon a public mandate so much as it presaged it. A year before the publication of the Slattery Report, Leslie Nerdland, mayor of Fairbanks, equated refugee settlement with the designation of Alaska as a penal colony. As the debate on refugee settlement in Alaska intensified, the preeminent Alaska political figures were Ernest Gruening, the incoming territorial governor, and Anthony Dimond. Inaugurated as governor on December 6, 1939, Gruening’s anti-immigrant settlement position dated to at least 1937, when he was the Interior Department’s Director of Territories and Island Possessions. Responding to a publisher’s desire for a stance on Jewish settlement in American territories, Gruening stated that he was “wholly opposed to any attempt at mass settlement” of foreign immigrants and that “such a settle-
ment would be productive of unfortunate results.” Dimond, in early October 1939, predicted the general opposition of the Alaskan public: “Accordingly, I am confident that the citizens of the Territory will never agree to any plan for admission of aliens to Alaska.” Dimond’s opposition to the proposal became part of the public response, as when an editorial in the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* noted the delegate “emphatically opposed the colonizing of Alaska by misfits and refugees” amongst other criticisms.

The proposal did foster some scattered initial support. The *Seward Gateway’s* first editorial reaction to the Slattery Report was a begrudging allowance that immigration sparking economic development was “definitely in line with American tradition.” Rather than portraying the plan as repurposing Alaska as a “dumping ground for destitute aliens,” easily opposed on myriad merits, the territory could become the home to selected skilled workers, an emphasis on “artisans” above “refugees.” The editorial concludes with a call for consistently applied ethics: “We cannot criticize oppression of minorities in Europe if we ourselves deny admission on grounds of race or creed.”

The sentiment of the Seward newspaper mirrored that of the local chamber of commerce. Meeting on October 4, chamber members unanimously offered a “particular consensus of opinion” in support of Director Ickes and refugee settlement. At this meeting, the Juneau Chamber’s opposition letter was read aloud, and the attending Sewardites described the Juneau position as “utterly illogical and totally out of order.” In Cordova, the local chamber found “an almost complete accord” with the Slattery Report and “forcefully disagreed” with the conclusions of its Juneau counterpart. The *Cordova Times* also editorialized in favor of the proposal:

This is contrary to the opinion of many of our contemporaries, but we can’t see how an influx of new settlers—foreign or domestic—is going to do the territory any harm. It is far more probably that it would make such a big change that Alaska would forge ahead and become a state, or at least a populous and wealthy territory, teeming with commerce and industry in which all of us might share.

This division between Alaska cities matches their relative position in the developmental pecking order. Juneau was the capital of the territory. Fairbanks had its historical position as Alaska’s leading city and the possibility of becoming a key waystation on the proposed highway to connect Alaska to the contiguous states. Anchorage was the proposed location of a military base. Comparatively, both Cordova and Seward then possessed two to five thousand fewer inhabitants than those other Alaskan cities and with far fewer opportunities for development given their individual geographies. Cordova and Seward’s smaller populations might have prompted their initial support for refugee settlement.

As time passed and the proposal moved closer to becoming policy, residents of both cities shifted their opinions and fell in
line with the rest of the territory. By April 1940, the Seward Gateway reported the local chamber now agreed with Dimond in his opposition to the King-Havenner bill. The following day, the newspaper published another editorial, entitled "Unsavory," postulating that the delegate would "have the united support of all Alaska." Don Carlos Brownell, then transitioning from his Seward mayorship to a seat in the territorial legislature, accompanied Dimond to Washington and testified against the immigration proposal before Congress. At the same time, the Cordova chamber reversed its stance and formally protested the King-Havenner bill while the Cordova Times now noted the "clear-cut logic" of Dimond's position. A November 1940 Alaska Life poll reported that 85.5% of Alaskans opposed foreign settlement in the territory. At the height of the congressional debate, the Juneau Daily Alaska Empire estimated a "preponderance of 99 to 1 against the plan." What Ickes saw as a logical attempt to answer two imperatives, Alaskan development and refugee asylum, did not account for Alaska culture and the antipathies contained within.

Complicating the dialogue was an avoidance of European Jews as the population most in need of refugee status and resettlement. The Slattery Report did not identify targeted populations beyond suggesting that "suitable prospective immigrants from foreign shores" could settle in Alaska. The various chamber of commerce responses, either in favor of or against immigrant settlers, also did not specify a refugee population that they particularly supported or opposed. While Alaskans were broadly aware of the intensifying oppression of Jews in Germany, explicit connections between that reality and refugee proposals were nearly nonexistent. The resultantly coded quality of the dialogue was not only a local feature. Henry L. Feingold notes that the usage of immigrants and refugees in American political dialogues, rather than direct references to oppressed Jews, originated with Franklin Roosevelt, who consistently spoke in general terms of political refugees.

Caught between implicit and explicit communications of refugee identities, the clarity of the dialogue on refugee immigration and settlement suffered. At the national level, the avoidance of direct references by the Roosevelt administration is reflective and responsive to anti-Semitic sentiments broadly present in 1930s America. While Secretary Ickes first publicly broached the possibility of refugee settlement in American territories two weeks after Kristallnacht in 1938, his department's publication makes no mention of specific populations. A 1939–40 proposal that explicitly named Jewish refugees as requiring aid was a political nonstarter, especially before America's entry into World War II. Notably, President Roosevelt never publicly endorsed the proposal within the Slattery Report or the King-Havenner Bill. Instead, Ickes and others sought to merge their sympathies for Jews and other European refugees with domestic aims.

At the Alaska level, this avoidance of specifics can be best observed in the sometimes tortured syntax of the debate. In their initial response to the Slattery Report, the Anchorage chamber laboriously avoided direct references while also managing to blame the victims for their misfortune:

Without casting any reflection on that race in our country which are of the same faith religiously as the refugees which the colonization plan is meant to embrace, we can safely say without fear of contradiction that those refugees have proven their now-assimilability which has resulted in the disaster which has overtaken them.

Ickes highlighted this divergence between message and meaning, claiming that King-Havenner "should instead be called a bill for the assistance and relief of the savagely persecuted people of some of the European totalitarian states." Evasion at this level and frequency requires effort, an aversion for the topic if not Jews themselves that was reflected in national policy.

The Ketchikan Alaska Chronicle singularly and openly addressed the underlying fears, chastising opponents of refugee settlement "for beating around the bush, just as the report itself dodged around the principal reason for its issuance: not only to propose a means of developing Alaska, but as a means of finding a haven for Jewish refugees." A 1938 Fairbanks Daily News-Miner survey of prominent locals reveals representative Alaskan attitudes towards Jews. Territorial legislator Jess Landers said: "I do not believe a Jewish or any other racial group of alien origin would be able to maintain themselves in Alaska." For the majority of white Alaskans, Jewish refugees registered as a race apart from the Christian Americans who had immigrated into the territory since its purchase from Russia in 1867. Indeed, as Stuart Svonkin among others has noted, Jewish participation in the civil rights battles of the 1950s and 60s was predicated upon shared qualities of discrimination, that Jews and African-Americans were both subaltern to white Christians.

Even Gruening, himself Jewish, could not muster policy level support for European Jews, noting that he was "wholly opposed to any attempt at mass settlement of Jews or of people of any other race or religion" anywhere in America. Prejudices, whatever
the stance of the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* was strongly anti-immigrant, the paper specifically was concerned that the Slattery Report presented no mechanism for “how to introduce a pre-dominant alien element and maintain the institutions of American democracy.” While the Anchorage chamber feared that “colonizing alien refugees into settlements will tend to stifle assimilation and prevent them from becoming Americanized,” one letter to the Juneau *Daily Alaska Empire* predicted that refugees “would soon drift into the towns as they are not racially or otherwise suited to agriculture.”

The variance in Alaskan arguments against refugee settlement in the territory illustrates racism’s frequently noted lack of consistent logic. Rather than a structured belief system based upon a systematic and evidenced engagement with reality, racism is prejudice inconsistently applied, supported by justifications and fears, and rarely amenable to revision. Admittedly, an individual racist act may be seen as rational if it follows a belief to a goal, but the racist belief itself remains irrational. The Alaskan predictions for Jews in Alaska were tellingly broad, diametric, incompatible, and absolute. Would Jews fail in Alaska? Or would Jews dominate Alaska? Others were less concerned with immigrants’ ability to assimilate than their potential to usurp or otherwise irrevocably damage American culture. From this point of view, immigrants would undermine American customs, replacing them with European ones that had purportedly fostered the culture of conflict found on the European continent. For example, Gruening proposed that refugees “should come here with the aspiration to be American citizens, to settle here and adapt themselves to our manners and customs and to divorce themselves as soon as possible from the spiritual inhibitions from which they suffer.” In this way, the turmoil of Europe was understood as resulting from disputed and split loyalties, religion versus national identification. In its resolution opposing refugee settlement in Alaska, the Territorial Senate asserted that “if even a few thousand European refugees were brought to Alaska... it would soon transfer the culture and economy in Alaska from American to alien, a transformation Alaskans do not want.”

Gruening predicted that refugee settlement proposals were destined to fail due to a “fear of Fifth Column activities.” For the Salmon Producers Association of Sitka, the territory required “Americans, not organized or unorganized groups of the Trojan...
Horse type that can turn against her at a moments [sic] notice, over-throw the scattered Civil Authorities and have Alaska turned over to a hostile power before our misguided Congressman was thru telling us such a thing could not happen.”

More ominously, Ernest Patty, a businessman and later president of the University of Alaska, suggested, “America should borrow a page from the Germans and attempt to do some long-range planning for the future.” To act otherwise, to allow or promote settlement by European settlers in Alaska would, as claimed by the Juneau Empire, prompt Alaska to become “virtually a foreign country.”

The proposal and subsequent legislation mandated a five-year period during which immigrant settlers would be required to maintain residence in Alaska. This qualification, however, “was no disincentive for those seeking to harm America” according to James A. Britton, operator of KGBU in Ketchikan, the self-proclaimed radio “Voice of Alaska.”

Other white territorial residents more clearly articulated their desires. “The people I speak of are white Americans of worthy stock who proved their desirability as American citizens before they came to Alaska or were native-born Americans” wrote one Alaska resident to Dimond. “If we are going to populate Alaska, let’s do it with people whom wish to come here from the United States,” wrote a Seward union to Dimond. In a supportive letter to the Juneau Chamber of Commerce, E. A. Sherman, an assistant chief of the U.S. Forest Service, argued that Alaska could progress better with “American citizens from our northern states, who had the courage and intuition to emigrate to the States, had learned our language, adopted our customs and were somewhat familiar with the workings of our rather unusual form of government.”

For some Alaskans, the issue was not just that Americans should be considered first, but that there were so many Americans in need of support. The Valdez Chamber of Commerce opposed refugee settlement on the basis that “there are enough Americans to do this work without complicating matters by tampering with the immigration laws.” “There are refugees from the United States: good, earnest people, who would do Alaska good,” the Ketchikan Alaska Chronicle reminded its readers. When called upon by Congress to offer his opinion, Dimond maintained this perspective; “Moreover, it seems to me that no such provision is necessary when we consider that in the United States at the present time we have literally hundreds of thousands of some of our best citizens who have been obliged to leave the so-called Dust Bowl region and migrate to other parts of the Nation.”

By the time the Slattery Report was being debated, impoverished Americans had endured a decade of the Great Depression without significant numbers of them making the difficult journey to Alaska, despite the economic potential therein. While Alaska’s 1939 population had grown by ten thousand residents over the previous decade, the territory would not surpass its pre-World War I population until the construction and federal investment boom of the 1940s. And as previously noted, Alaskans clamored for a population influx. The unfamiliarity, distance, isolation, and climate of Alaska likely dissuaded possible migrants. In fact, interstate migration remained relatively modest in America through World War II. While people during the Great Depression were increasingly mobile across short distances, they remained in relative proximity to family and social support systems as well as familiar landscapes.

The questionable logic of relying upon Dust Bowl refugees to populate the northern territory did not escape the notice of the proposal’s leading advocate. Responding to Gruening’s critique of the Slattery Report, Ickes responded with a point-by-point rebuttal of anti-refugee settlement arguments: “[S]urely you recognize the fact that immigrants once admitted to the United States have no more incentive to go to Alaska than American citizens have, 99.95% of whom prefer to live in the United States.” Though Dimond considered Dust Bowl refugees as “admirable settlers,” they had not emigrated to Alaska in notable numbers despite intense motivation to seek more economically prosperous environs. Ickes acknowledged that “the problems of population and immigration in Alaska are in fact very different from those in the States.” Thus, Ickes presented the legislation as giving “special consideration to the peculiar needs of Alaska” without attempting wholesale revision of American immigration policy.

In a press release timed to the introduction of the refugee settlement proposal in Congress, Ickes recognized and discredited the Alaskan opposition. Per the release, the response from the contiguous United States towards the proposal was exceedingly positive. More than 84 percent of American newspapers commenting on the issue supported the proposal, and only 8.5 percent explicitly disapproved. In what was termed “one of the most comprehensive endorsements of any major, far-reaching National development ever proposed in the United States,” a newspaper from every state, excepting Wyoming, advocated for refugee settlement. Regarding the Alaska resistance, Ickes responded, “Much of this opposition is couched in incomprehensible phraseology. It is mainly from a handful of Alaska’s 30,000 White population, which feels that its monopoly of Alaskan resources would be threatened by an increased population.”
Ickes thus identified the paradox of the Alaskan position on the state’s development. Alaska needed people, but no domestic population had shown a willingness to make the move. Given a perceived choice between development via foreign settlement and the ongoing stagnation, the territory’s white stakeholders repeatedly and emphatically chose the latter. The Alaskan residents’ xenophobia proved more potent than their desire for development and sustainable population growth. In this way, Alaska is symptomatic of the broader American social and political climate. David Wyman noted the Slattery proposal and response as an exemplar of American refugee policy during World War II, and that Americans hid the true extent of their xenophobic and anti-Semitic inclinations behind a bureaucratic barrier, his titular paper walls.57

What is unique regarding Alaskan attitudes at this time is their perception of themselves. A particularly virulent form of ethnocentrism permeates Alaska’s history. Partly, it is a geographically remote transmission of the broad Puritan values that pervade much of American culture, or, at least, the perception of American society by Americans. Gregory Bateson and Jurgen Ruesch note that these values include a higher valuation of attributes that presuppose a hearty individualism necessary for the romanticized pioneer: “toughness, resourcefulness, purpose, and even purity.” 58 This concept is similar in spirit to Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis, that life with aspects of daily struggle evinces more value than a life lived in comfort.59

This exceptionalism partly justified living in Alaska. Residents of Alaska in 1940 possessed far greater access to the creature comforts of the Lower 48 than did the prospectors and trappers of decades prior. In the major Alaskan population centers, newspapers advertised the newest car models and movies. Yet, the climate and geographic isolation created a perceived distance between Alaskan attitudes and culture versus that of the Lower 48. Dimond claimed that due to a shared stakeholding in a unique environment, Alaskans were “imbued with the generous and tolerant frontier spirit.” 60 The Slattery Report cataloged this illusory aspect of Alaska culture as a positive for immigration. Refugees could partake in the “same conditions of frontier life” that led men to be “valued for what they are without regard to ancestry or creed.”61 This perception of Alaskans as exceptional has survived decades of construction booms, infrastructure build-up, and oil wealth. That division between identity and reality persists. On one side is how Alaskans think and act. On the other, there is Outside, a distinction common in both individual discussions and media coverage. And as a popular bumper sticker in Alaska proclaimed, “We don’t give a damn how they do it Outside.”62

A distinctive element of Alaskan exceptionalism during the refugee settlement debate was the repeated declarations on the territorial residents’ lack of prejudice by those same residents. In its resolution that condemned the Slattery Report, the Juneau Chamber of Commerce claimed that “the present inhabitants of Alaska are noted for their ready response to appeals for aid and assistance to those in need.”63 Despite his recent arrival in Alaska, relative to the immigration debate, Gruening “pointed out to Secretary Ickes that there was probably less prejudice in Alaska against aliens than in any part of the union.”64 Dimond wrote:

It is also unquestionably true, as the Secretary observes, that the people of Alaska are probably as free from racial and religious bigotry as any in the world...Nobody is hated or despised because of race or origin or because of religious profession. Minorities are not thought of as such and their members are treated precisely as other citizens.65

Again, this perception of Alaskans as uniquely lacking prejudice and of Alaska as a land of extraordinary equality persists. As recently as January 2017, Charles Wohlforth, author of several books on Alaska, proclaimed in Anchorage’s Alaska Dispatch News that Alaska’s “uniquely equal society” was the “one piece of the Alaska myth that is actually true.”66

The Slattery Report itself referenced this conceptualization, claiming that “nowhere in the world today will the immigrant find less racial or religious prejudice” than in Alaska.67 A spokesman for the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce suggested that the presence of refugee settlers would introduce intolerance to the territory; “Subsidized foreign refugees competing with American businessmen and American citizens would create a race prejudice such as has been practically unknown in our country during its history.”68

Despite the protestations of equality by residents, prejudice has always been an aspect of American Alaska as it is an aspect of every American state. Suffice that Dimond’s assertion before Congress of Alaska as a “casteless Territory”69 was and is a comforting lie by and to the dominant white culture. Much of the newly arrived white population patterned their society in the manner with which they were accustomed in the Lower 48, incuding exclusionary practices. Stephen Haycox has noted this as the lie of
the Alaskan frontier, given the tendency of residents to “recreate and perpetuate the familiar American culture.” Baseball. Architecture. Clothing. As possible, settlers carried American trends north. However, prejudice is also an aspect of American culture. As such, racism also became an aspect of Alaskan culture. And as herein demonstrated, prejudice often became a structural component of life in the eventual state. The objections to the proposed settlement of Alaska by European refugees, notably inclusive of Jews fleeing Germany, demonstrate why and how white Alaskans policed and facilitated a demographic identity. Further, the commonality of arguments made by Alaskans against refugee settlement, most often predicated upon a defense of the extant culture, spotlighted prejudice as an inherent aspect of said culture.

The King-Havenner bill died in committee in 1940. An attempt by New York Representative Samuel Dickstein to revive the concept the following year similarly failed to advance. In both instances, the uproar by Alaskans proved decisive, particularly via the efforts of Anthony Dimond in Congress. Alaskans made their choice. The clearing of space for American white possession, so common and prevalent in the contiguous states, was recreated within the vast expanse of the territory. From a white Alaskan perspective during the Slattery/King-Havenner debate, maintenance of this zone of white America preference and domination was an essential aspect of Alaskan culture, an imperative apparently greater than the need for a population influx and the attendant expansion of Alaska’s economy and infrastructure.

While many Alaskans believed, and continue to believe, that they are unique Americans, their efforts to police the demographics of the territory and eventual state are echoes of similar efforts expended throughout America, before and after the debate on World War II refugees. Alaskans and their prejudices are not unique. Alaskans’ seeming willingness to sacrifice potential economic gains for some purported cultural and racial hegemony is not unique. The dissonance between perceptions of self and reality is notable, particularly the extent of the disparity between stated desires for and actions against a population influx. Thus, the extended episode, from Slattery Report through failed Congressional action, is a notable yet not unique incident in the history of American racial policy. Counterintuitively, that seeming mundanity is the relevance of the Slattery Report and its fallout. Prejudice in America is not linked to specific geographies so much as it followed the patterns of settlement. White, non-Native Alaskans, despite their various cities, counties, and states of origin, carried with them the prejudices prevalent in the Lower 48 to their new homes. Therefore, the currents of discrimination can be explored in the unlikeliest of places.

Sociologist Gerald Berman demonstrates that Alaskans after the war displayed more tolerance towards Jews, notably after the extent of the Holocaust was publicly revealed. Though Jewish, Gruening enjoyed long-lasting popularity in Alaska, serving as state senator from 1959-1969. Zachariah Loussac served two terms as mayor of Anchorage, from 1948-1951, and his name adorns the city’s central library. Yet, this may be seen as incidental acceptance of singular individuals already established in the territory. That is, Alaskans welcomed individuals from less desired demographic groups while opposing a significant and coherent influx from the same demographic group.

Notably, in an incident not noted by Berman, the Juneau Chamber of Commerce was granted an opportunity after World War II to review their opposition to refugee immigration. In 1947, the Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons distributed a letter to chambers of commerce around the country. The board for this committee included William Donovan, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Fiorello La Guardia. The letter requested the support of these chambers towards a Congressional proposal to screen and admit 100,000 of the 850,000 still present in European refugee camps. The Juneau Chamber of Commerce protested the suggestion in a letter to Bob Bartlett, Dimond’s successor as the Alaskan delegate to Congress. The Chamber reiterated its prior stance against the Slattery plan, claiming that the arguments of eight years prior held. Settling of Alaska by refugees remained “socially and morally wrong.” The Chamber also gifted Delegate Bartlett with several copies of their eight-year-old position paper on immigra-
tion, signaling an unchanging persistence of fears, prejudice, and xenophobia.

NOTES

4. Slattery, 84.
5. Slattery, 83.
7. "Neither the report, the memorandum transmitting it nor the press release accompanying the issuance of the report conceals the hope that refugees may be permitted to enter Alaska under some special arrangements and that such refugees may do for Alaska what American citizens have thus far failed to do." Harold Ickes to Ernest Gruening, November 29, 1939, Box 39, Folder 354, EHG.
11. Department of Interior press release, February 11, 1940, Box 39, Folder 353, EHG.
13. Ernest Gruening to Joseph Otmar Heffer, January 6, 1937, EHG.
14. Dimond to Mead, October 9, 1939.
52. Salmon Producers Association of Sitka, Alaska to Anthony Dimond, March 12, 1941, Series I, Box 17, Folder 229, AJD.
53. Ernest N. Patty to H.L. Faulkner, April 21, 1941, Series I, Box 17, Folder 229, AJD.
55. James A. Britton to Anthony Dimond, February 10, 1941, Series I, Box 17, Folder 229, AJD.
56. Raymond J. Stafford to Anthony Dimond, March 17, 1941, Series I, Box 17, Folder 229, AJD.
57. Seward Chapter of International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union to Anthony Dimond, February 27, 1941, Series I, Box 17, Folder 229, AJD.
59. Valdez Chamber of Commerce Resolution on the Problem of Alaskan Development, January 23, 1940, Box 39, Folder 353, EHG.
61. Dimond, Congressional Record, 4067.
63. Ickes to Gruening, November 29, 1939, 4.
64. Dimond, Congressional Record, 4067.
65. Ickes to Gruening, November 29, 1939, 4.
66. Press release, Department of the Interior, February 11, 1940, Box 39, Folder 353, EHG.
70. Dimond to Mead, October 9, 1939, 1.
71. Slattery, 83-84.
75. Dimond to Mead, October 9, 1939, 1.
77. Slattery, 84.
79. Dimond, Congressional Record, 4069.
81. For more on Samuel Dickstein’s efforts on behalf of European refugees, see Wyman, Paper Walls, 67-68 and 110-111.